State of Ontario's Protected Areas Report

Ontario

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K: *Moose in Warp Bay*, Bob Elliot
L: *Algonquin Provincial Park*, Ontario Park
M: *Campfire River Conservation Reserve*, Christopher Martin
N: *Lake Superior Provincial Park*, Sam Brinker

Executive Summary

Ontario's system of protected areas includes over 630 provincial parks and conservation reserves covering an area of 9.5 million hectares, or about nine per cent of Ontario. The *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006* requires that the Minister of Natural Resources report publicly on the state of the protected area system at least once every five years. To meet this commitment the Ministry of Natural Resources developed a comprehensive framework to monitor ecological, social and economic aspects to support sustainable planning and management of provincial parks and conservation reserves. This information, covering the period 2001-09, forms the basis for this *State of Ontario's Protected Areas Report*. The report consists of four chapters that collectively describe the state of Ontario's diverse protected areas.

The first chapter, *Background Information*, provides context regarding the planning and management of Ontario's protected areas. Included are a description of the legislative and strategic direction for the protected area system, a brief history of the development of the system and an overview of the planning process for protected areas. Together, these aspects demonstrate an ongoing and evolving commitment to the integrity of the areas that are protected.

In chapter two, *Protecting Ontario's Natural Diversity*, information is provided on the representation of ecological, geological and cultural heritage features within Ontario's provincial parks and conservation reserves. Ontario has adopted an Ecological Land Classification system as a framework for terrestrial ecosystem representation within the protected areas system. Geological representation is based on environmental themes organized by time, landform evolution and geologic process. Cultural heritage representation is based on a framework that organizes history in relation to aspects of the landscape and physical environment that are basic to human development, including Aboriginal and European settlement.

Chapter three, *Ecological Integrity*, defines and interprets the term ecological integrity. Factors that contribute to the integrity of protected areas and to the maintenance of ecological integrity over time are discussed. The discussion addresses known pressures, responses to those pressures and the benefits of the protected area system, including the conservation of biodiversity.

The fourth chapter, *Opportunities and Benefits*, provides information on the diverse social and economic benefits associated with Ontario's protected area system. These benefits include opportunities for recreation, traditional uses, research and education, as well as broader ecological and societal benefits. There are about 10 million visits to provincial parks each year, with the majority being day users.

Photo: Chuck Miller

Franklin Island Conservation Reserve.

Photo: F. Allen Woodliffe

Stone Road Alvar ANSI.

Résumé

Le réseau ontarien de zones protégées comprend plus de 630 parcs provinciaux et réserves de conservation qui couvrent une superficie de 9,5 millions d'hectares au total, soit neuf pour cent du territoire de l'Ontario. En vertu de la *Loi de 2006 sur les parcs provinciaux et les réserves de conservation*, le ministre des Richesses naturelles est tenu de donner un rapport public sur l'état du réseau de zones protégées au moins tous les cinq ans. Pour satisfaire à cette obligation, le ministère des Richesses naturelles a mis au point un cadre complet de surveillance des aspects écologiques, sociaux et économiques afin de soutenir la planification et la gestion durables des parcs provinciaux et réserves de conservation. Cette information, qui porte sur la période de 2001 à 2009, forme la base du rapport *State of Ontario's Protected Areas Report* (rapport sur l'état des zones protégées de l'Ontario). Ce rapport (disponible en anglais seulement) est constitué de quatre chapitres qui, ensemble, décrivent l'état des diverses zones protégées de l'Ontario.

Le premier chapitre décrit le contexte dans lequel s'inscrit la planification et la gestion des zones protégées de l'Ontario. Il comprend notamment la description des dispositions législatives et orientations stratégiques qui s'appliquent au réseau de zones protégées, un bref historique de la mise en place de ce réseau et une vue d'ensemble du processus de planification des zones protégées. Ces éléments démontrent un engagement permanent et évolutif à assurer l'intégrité des zones protégées.

Le deuxième chapitre traite de la protection de la diversité naturelle de l'Ontario. Il fournit des renseignements sur la représentation des particularités écologiques, géologiques et de patrimoine culturel dans les parcs provinciaux et les réserves de conservation de l'Ontario. L'Ontario a adopté un système de classification écologique des terres comme cadre pour la représentation des écosystèmes terrestres au sein du réseau de zones protégées. La représentation géologique repose sur des thèmes environnementaux organisés selon l'époque, l'évolution du terrain et le processus géologique. La représentation du patrimoine culturel repose sur une structure qui organise les antécédents historiques en rapport avec les aspects du paysage et du milieu physique qui sont fondamentaux du point de vue du développement humain, notamment l'établissement des communautés autochtones et des Européens.

Le troisième chapitre définit et interprète ce que l'on entend par « intégrité écologique ». Il examine également les facteurs qui contribuent à l'intégrité des zones protégées et à la préservation de l'intégrité écologique au fil du temps. Cet examen traite notamment des pressions connues, des réponses à ces pressions ainsi que des avantages du réseau de zones protégées, dont la préservation de la biodiversité.

Le quatrième chapitre fournit des renseignements sur les divers avantages sociaux et économiques liés au réseau de zones protégées de l'Ontario. Ces avantages incluent les possibilités d'activités de loisirs, d'utilisations traditionnelles, de recherche scientifique et d'éducation, ainsi que des avantages plus larges pour la société et sur le plan de l'écologie. Chaque année, il y a environ 10 millions de visites dans les parcs provinciaux, en majorité pour des visites pendant la journée.

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